

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully requested in light of the above amendments and the following remarks.

The Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication in the Office Action that claims 6, 13, 16, and 19 are directed to allowable subject matter and would be allowed if placed in independent form. Allowable claims 6, 13, 16, and 19 have been so rewritten to include the features of their base claims and any intervening claims. Claim 16 has been revised to overcome the objection thereto. Therefore, it is submitted that allowance of claims 6, 13, 16, and 19 is warranted.

Claims 1-5, 7-12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20-25, and 27-30 have been cancelled.

Claim 26 has been rewritten in independent form to include the features of base claim 20 and the feature recited in claim 27.

The specification has been amended to replace reference character 3 with 73 in paragraph [0008] on page 3, line 4, as requested in the Office Action. No new matter is believed to be introduced by this amendment.

The Office Action objects to the specification for failing to identify reference characters 4 and 15. The Applicants

respectfully note that reference characters 4 and 15 are identified in the specification in paragraphs [0057] and [0060], respectively. Withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Claim 26 was rejected, under 35 USC §103(a), as being unpatentable over either Brown et al. (EP 1 063 334) or Brown et al. (US 6,485,856) in view of D'Aleo et al. (US 6,372,372). To the extent these rejections may be deemed applicable to amended claim 26, the Applicants respectfully traverse based on the points set forth below.

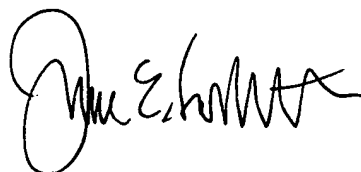
The Applicants note that Brown '334 and Brown '856 disclose a non-woven fiber web comprising a plurality of first fibers of amorphous silica that may be bonded with one or more binder substances such as Nafion™. Therefore, Brown does not appear to disclose or suggest granular insert members, as now recited in claim 26. D'Aleo is not cited in the Office Action for supplementing the teachings of Brown '334 or Brown '856 with respect to this feature.

Accordingly, the Applicants submit that the applied references do not disclose or render obvious the subject matter now defined by claim 26. Therefore, it is submitted that allowance of claim 26 is warranted.

In view of the above, it is submitted that this application is in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is respectfully solicited.

If any issues remain which may best be resolved through a telephone communication, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned at the local Washington, D.C. telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



Date: August 7, 2006
JEL/DWW/att

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